

IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A cutting element as used in an electric shaver, manufactured from maraging or precipitation-hardenable stainless steel with a surface hardened by plasma nitriding, wherein the cutting element is precipitationally hardened simultaneously with the plasma nitriding on all surfaces of the cutting element to form a surface top layer of steel supersaturated with nitrogen and a diffusion layer adjoining the top layer with a hardness ranging from the hardness of the top layer to the hardness of the steel before hardening so that the top layer has a substantially uniform hardness and the diffusion layer has a ~~continuously decreasing~~ hardness with depth of the diffusion layer, the ~~continuously decreasing~~ hardness of the diffusion layer ~~continuously decreasing~~ from outer portions of the diffusion layer toward a center of the diffusion layer and meeting at the center of

the diffusion layer to form a minimum peak at the center, wherein a hardness at the center of the diffusion layer is an original hardness the stainless steel.

2. (Previously Presented) The cutting element as claimed in claim 1, wherein a thickness of the hardened supersaturated top layer ranges from 5 μm to 25 μm .

3. (Previously Presented) The cutting element according to claim 1, wherein a thickness of the diffusion layer ranges from 5 μm to 20 μm .

4. (Previously Presented) The cutting element according to claim 1, wherein the hardness of the hardened supersaturated top layer is at least 1300 HV and the original hardness at the center of the diffusion layer is 200HV.

5. (Previously Presented) The cutting element according to claim 1, wherein the cutting element is designed for use in a

shaver of a dry shaver type.

6. (Previously Presented) The cutting element according to claim 1, wherein the cutting element is designed for use in a shaver of an additive shaver type.

7. (Currently Amended) An electric shaver comprising a cutting element, the cutting element being precipitationally hardened simultaneously with plasma nitriding on all surfaces of the cutting element to form a surface top layer of steel supersaturated with nitrogen and a diffusion layer adjoining the top layer with a hardness ranging from the hardness of the top layer to the hardness of the steel before hardening so that the top layer has a substantially uniform hardness and the diffusion layer has a ~~continuously decreasing~~ hardness with depth of the diffusion layer, the ~~continuously decreasing~~ hardness of the diffusion layer ~~continuously decreasing~~ from outer portions of the diffusion layer toward a center of the diffusion layer and meeting at the center of the diffusion layer to form a minimum peak at the center, wherein a hardness at the center of the diffusion layer is an original

hardness the stainless steel.

Claims 8-9 (Canceled)

10. (Currently Amended) An electric shaver, comprising:
a stainless steel cutting element having a hardened layer on all surfaces of a blade and being precipitationally hardened simultaneously with plasma nitriding on the all surfaces of the cutting element to form a surface top layer of steel supersaturated with nitrogen and a diffusion layer adjoining the top layer with a hardness ranging from the hardness of the top layer to the hardness of the stainless steel before hardening so that the top layer has a substantially uniform hardness and the diffusion layer has a ~~continuously decreasing hardness with depth of the diffusion layer,~~
the ~~continuously decreasing hardness of the diffusion layer~~
~~continuously decreasing from outer portions of the diffusion layer~~
toward a center of the diffusion layer and meeting at the center of the diffusion layer to form a minimum peak at the center, wherein a hardness at the center of the diffusion layer is an original hardness the stainless steel.

11. (Previously Presented) The electric shaver as claimed in claim 10, wherein a thickness of the hardened supersaturated top layer ranges from approximately 5 μm to approximately 25 μm .

12. (Previously Presented) The electric shaver as claimed in claim 10, wherein a thickness of the diffusion layer ranges from approximately 5 μm to approximately 20 μm .

13. (Previously Presented) The electric shaver as claimed in claim 10, wherein the hardness of the hardened supersaturated top layer is at least 1300 HV and the original hardness at the center of the diffusion layer is 200HV.

14. (Previously Presented) The electric shaver as claimed in claim 10, wherein the shaver is a dry shaver.

15. (Previously Presented) The electric shaver as claimed in claim 10, wherein the shaver is an additive shaver.

16. (Previously Presented) The electric shaver as claimed in claim 10, wherein the shaver comprises a plurality of cutting elements.

17. (Currently Amended) A method comprising the acts of:
forming a cutting element from austenitic stainless steel; and
precipitationally hardening the cutting element at a same temperature simultaneously with plasma nitriding on the all surfaces of the cutting element to form a first layer having a substantially uniform hardness and a second layer having a ~~continuously~~ decreasing hardness with depth of the second layer, the ~~continuously~~ decreasing hardness of the second layer ~~continuously~~ decreasing from outer portions of the second layer toward a center of the second layer and meeting at the center of the diffusion layer to form a minimum peak at the center, wherein a hardness at the center of the diffusion layer is an original hardness the stainless steel.

Claims 18-24 (Canceled)

25. (Previously Presented) The cutting element of claim 1, wherein the hardness of the hardened supersaturated surface top layer is at least six times the original hardness at the center of the diffusion layer.

26. (Previously Presented) The electric shaver of claim 7, wherein the hardness of the hardened supersaturated surface top layer is at least six times the original hardness at the center of the diffusion layer.

27. (Previously Presented) The electric shaver of claim 10, wherein the hardness of the hardened supersaturated surface top layer is at least six times the original hardness at the center of the diffusion layer.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 17, wherein the simultaneously hardening is performed until a hardness of the first layer is at least six times the original hardness at the center of the second layer.